

Hello, and thank you for the opportunity and privilege to speak today. My name is Samantha Lucky and I am the Principal of Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Elementary School. I have been a member of this school team for the past 6 years and it has been an absolute privilege to serve as both a Dean of Students, and now for these past two years as Principal. There is so much that is special about our school community and what we do daily. All of that starts and focuses on our amazing scholars, who I would like to speak more about today.

Since joining AFBAES and serving the Bridgeport community, it has been very evident to that me that there are vast discrepancies between the amount of funding our school receives and those in our neighboring districts. It has been so evident that my own scholars who range from the ages of 4-10 are also aware of it. No, they do not understand why they receive less support than schools only miles away, but nevertheless they continue to show up in such big ways on things like our state test with their results year over year. They outperform our neighboring wealthier districts tremendously, and yet they do not see the same benefits those schools see consistently.

What is so amazing about our school community, is that despite the gap between what we receive v. other wealthier schools, we press on and work to do what is best for our students daily. Our staff loves our kids and their families, and so they continue to push and make it work with the reduced funding we get annually. Yes, they have to hear me speak about budget cuts frequently, and yes that is discouraging, but our team and family never give up. Our school is so special. Our scholars are so special and not only are they academically prepared daily, but also we teach them how to be kind to those around them in order to develop into leaders of strength and integrity.

As an educator who has been in this field for almost ten years, I am not an advocate of pitting schools and districts against each other. Not at all. I believe all families deserve a choice for where their children attend school. The problem is our families have all the choices that do not receive adequate funding to ensure their children get a top-quality education. They must choose amongst schools that all have to cut corners constantly to make the experience as great as we can, but no it is not equitable. No, I am not an advocate of choosing sides and this one versus that one, but I am advocate of fairness. Please do what is fair and honestly what is right. It is not about us as adults, but it is about our children. In a world that rarely shows what kindness looks like, especially this year during our pandemic, we really need to show them what is fair, what is right, and what it means to fully support them financially as they continue on their educational path. Thank-you for your time and consideration.